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On the Ecology of the Hydra

"At first I thought it was a snake, den 2 snakes. 'da third head gave it away." - Holfandun, Othlandic cook

Nomenclature: Hydra

Description: Reptilia Hydroza, Many-headed Reptile, Chthonic water beast, Hydroraptor, Water serpent

Things that are known:

- They are reptiles
- They often live in swamps or near water
- They have multiple heads

Rumors and other whispers in the dark:

- Hydra isn't a separate creature. They are actually reptile elementals
- Each hydra starts off as a genius. However when they are forced to regenerate or grow a new head, their intelligence is forced to be split between each surviving head
- Something about the regenerative powers is easily influenced by the elemental planes. When fire influences a hydra, you get a pyrohydra, when ice does, you get a cyrohydra
- Hydra does not refer to a specific creature, but rather a mutation or disease that grants extra heads
- There are rarer elements that affect hydras, from chronohydras to mirror hydras, radioactive to vacuum hydras

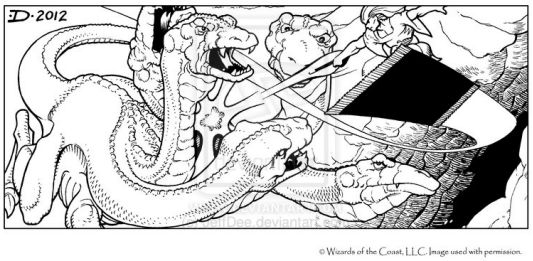
- There is always one head that plots against the others. It strives to secretly acquire aid, which is difficult being that it is attached to the other heads
- Hydras are not quadrapeds. They are actually bipedal
- Several varieties of hydras exist, winged dragon types, slow moving swamp types. Serpent types and even types that walk like a man.
- There is a dimension of snakes, and hydras are just ancient reptiles who contain a genetic code that grows a mobile portal to that realm

Dungeons and Dragons Cartoon

- Killing the snakes just allows more to work their way through the portal, but whatever you do, make sure to close that gate. If a hydra body ends up wedging it open a whole circus of snakes can pour out
- Hydras only have a single head, but it is displaced throughout time. That is how so many heads appear from a single neck
- Hydras heads are not actually heads. They are just tooth and spiked tentacles that appear to be heads. Its actual head is in its tail
- That is a particularly nasty rumor that has no truth to it. Its brain and organs are all safe inside the armored body, and its real mouth is a sucking orifice in its belly
- Hydras don't really 'grow new heads', they are just actually better regenerators than trolls

- That said, each part of a hydra cut off will grow a new hydra. Once there was just one, chopped into a million pieces by brave heroes
- The hydra isn't a predator at all. It's a freshwater filter feeder, needing many heads to siphon plankton, small fish, and algee from the water. They are the most peaceful of swamp creatures
- Hydra isn't a creature, it's the titanic form that the apocalypse comes in, each head devouring a part of the world
- It isn't just the heads but all limbs that grow back, hence the origin of the hydracentipede
- Not only is their breath poisonous, but also their blood and even the tracks they leave on the ground
- Hydra eggs are quite valuable
- Hydra is simply a word to describe the endless hordes of reptile peoples in the swamp. They are the hydra, stealing and raiding from the edge of civilisation
- The hydra is a boneless creature, supported by hydrostatic pressurized vesicles
- Hydras don't eat meat, they actually drain all liquid from their prey. They are hydroraptors (water-thieves)
- Hydra heads once cut off leave stumps that regrow new (or multiple) heads. This can be cauterized by fire

- They can also be effectively cauterized by electricity or acids, which can work much faster than fire and reduce the risk of blood poisoning
- Hydras are actually squid
- Hydra's tongues can predict the weather by changing colors
- If cauterized the heads never grow back
- Hydra are docile herd animals, raised for food. They have multiple heads due to breeding practices to increase the yield of the head which is used to make delicious soups and jellies.



Jeff Dee

- They hydra will continue to grow heads as needed, but when it reaches the high teens, it's blood pressure goes too low to maintain consciousness. Slowly, as it rests, many of the heads are reabsorbed after a number of hours
- The above is a lie, because as magical beasts, the hydra has nothing so prosaic as blood. The growth is caused by the salty tears of innocent slaughtered animals, slain without propitiating the spirits of the forest.
- The hydra is no reptile, but a mobile aggressive plant
- Hydras, experiencing aggressive unpopularity due to their "All mobile things are food" international relations policy, have a strong preference to lair in dismal out of the way places
- The hydra has only a single brain, meaning psionic attacks, charms, and other features do indeed only need to be applied once against the hydra, not against each head

Ruth Tay

- The former piece of information is an ancient propaganda piece by the hydra ministry of public relations Don't be caught off guard
- Hydras love riddles, it has one for each head. If you can solve all the riddles, it will allow you to have its hoard. Answering all the riddles and the hydra will allow you to claim its hoard. Answer incorrectly and the hydra will attempt to make you into dinner
- Yuan-ti are servants of the hydra, each desperately hoping to be blessed with the honor of becoming a hydra itself
- Hydras are the weaponized result of possibility harvesting. The hydra is just a single large snake, but each head is simply the altered positions all manifesting at the same time. This means on any give round a hydra has 3-18 heads
- A multi-headed hydra only has one head, inside the mouth of which is another head, like a russian stacked doll. It's heads all the way down.

Historiae Animalium, illus. unknown (1551).
Public domain; thanks to the National Library of Medicine for the photo.

- Hydras are living beings with fractal DNA
- Someone once made a wish to never be lonely. Every hydra ever is the result
- The hydra has a regenerative organ deep within its body. It is coconut-sized and gristly and is called a terratocopia, shaped like strange, juicy sea-shell.
- Many people, especially elves, believe that powered terratocopia is the cure to any ills. Especially erectile dysfunction
- Each hydra is not a separate beast, but an individual sensory organ of a much larger creature. They are extensions into this dimensional realm and learn about it much like babies, by taking

the things within it and consuming it.

- A hydra is like a rat king but for dragons
- Hydras are an endangered species. This is purely coincidental and has nothing to do with the terratocopia or any cultures specific believes about the said organ.
- A maiden per head surrounding the hydra works as an effective method of neutralizing the beast. Spread in a circle equidistant from the hydra results in confusion.
    - "*The hero Arthix promised the Lord of Thambar that he would nullify a particularly troublesome seven headed hydra that dwelt in the bottom of a well and guarded a gem called 'the Heartstone' that the Lord coveted. Arthix asked for the loan of seven of the Lord's tenderest and most desirable concubines. These he chained in a circle around the well, each one the exact same distance from the well and an equal distance from each other -- like numbers on a dial. The hydra crawled up from the well with each head looking in a different direction as was its custom. Each head saw a writhing, shrieking, delicious concubine and each head strained to pull the beast towards that desired morsel, but each head was equally strong so the beast remained stationary. Arthix snuck in, stole the Heartstone and buggered off. One of the concubines managed to wriggle free of her chains, and, likewise, buggered off. The head that had been eyeing her turned it's attention to the next concubine in the circle... suddenly that concubine had two heads looking at her and the hydra pulled itself in her direction, devoured her and then devoured the other five concubines in turn. The Lord of Thambar was furious. The escaped concubine followed Arthix back to his boat and professed her undying love for him. After they escaped the island together, she chopped off his head with his sword while he slept, threw his body overboard, sailed for the mainland and used the proceeds from the Heartstone to live life on her own terms rather than having to be a concubine for the Lord of Thambar. The Lord of Thambar was furious, but wasted his time looking for Arthix (who was fish food).*" - Stephen Poag
- The hydra is a natural apex of Lamarckian evolution. The regeneration abilities of the lizard are taken to extremes and produces a succession of multi-headed beasts, not immediately or obviously related to the hydra
- All hydras are related to the Ur-Hydra and as such are psionically linked
- Hydras gain immunity to an attack that removes a head, making the single or double-headed hydras the most dangerous.
- Hydras aren't monsters! It's the name of a refreshing summer pastry with ice-cream filling and seven raisins served at the forty-four courts of the vile queen Ayuwainya

Illustration from AD&D Monster Manual

- Each head believes itself to be the main head and is conflicted between protecting the body and eliminating its competition.
- There are no hydras, but their are anti-hydras, with one head and multiple bodies
- Hydras are kept as pets by ettins who give them each one name per head
- Hydra reproduce asexually by budding
- Hydras have horns that are not used in combat. The females horns are shorter then the males
- They can see in the dark with no problem
- The hydra isn't a reptile but is actually a type of land jellyfish, distantly related to coral
- Hydras are magic creatures that require no food. They kill out of inborn aggression and pleasure. Soon even this grows dim and they become insanely aggressive.
- Hydras are actually a larval form of medusea
- It's actually the other way around, a medusa that lives long enough becomes a hydra
- Hydras are former pets flushed by elven owners once too big for their aquariums
- They hydra is actually a normal river serpent, affected by a terratic virus. It reproduces by shedding the virus in waters where it prefers to live. Eventually it becomes ill and overwhelmed, resulting in a frenzied, demented final stage characterized by staggering regenerative powers. If it survives long enough, its whole body sloughs away and collapses in a mass of aggressive tumors
- Fish and game designed and introduced the hydra as a simple fish control measure. The fact that they aggressively eat every native species including humans was an unfortunate side effect
- Hydra are actually mutated fish or possibly plesiosaurs

- Hydras fling themselves at knights and other monsters, because when they have too many heads they can't move to feed themselves and starve

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